

Giving and Praying.

FEBRUARY 22nd.]

[MATT. 6 : 1-13.]

OUR LORD warns his disciples against the practices and teaching of the Scribes and Pharisees. Alms were to be given, but not ostentatiously : prayers uttered, but not with hypocritical publicity : fasting observed, but not to make a show of it. At the request of the disciples Jesus dictated that short and perfect prayer—the model on which all our prayers are formed and which thenceforth became the choicest heritage of every Christian liturgy. Compare Luke 11 : 1-4. Vs. 1-4. *Do not your alms—or righteousness—a part standing for the whole of that righteousness in the doing of which believers are to exceed the Scribes and Pharisees, ch. 5 : 20. Blessed is he that doeth righteousness, Ps. 106 : 3. To be seen of them—for display. No reward—for God regards only the motive. Do not sound a trumpet—to have it taken notice of and spoken about. As the hypocrites—who act a part ; pretend to be what they are not. They have—they secure human applause now, and that is all they will ever get. But thou—"Thou" and "ye" repeatedly—and pointedly contrasted with "hypocrites." Let not thy left hand—make nothing of it even in your own thoughts, lest it minister to pride. Thy Father seeth in secret—Heb. 4 : 13. Luke 14 : 12-14. Openly—at the Judgement, Matt. 25 : 34. Vs. 5, 6. They pray stauding—this posture in prayer, observed in the Jewish and early Christian Church, is not condemned, but the spirit and motive is. But thou—prayer is a personal matter. Enter thy closet—neither is public prayer condemned ; it is the retiring character of all prayer that is here commended ; Luke 18 : 10-14. Vs. 7, 8. Vain repetitions—a senseless multiplication of the same words. As the heathen—Mohammedan and Hindu devotees still do this, and even some Christian churches thus use this very prayer given by our Lord as an antidote to vain repetitions. Your Father knoweth—before ye ask him. Dan. 2 : 21. God does not require to be informed of our needs, Ps. 139. Yet, He will "be enquired of" by his children, Ezek. 36 : 37. Vs. 9, 10. After this manner—of brevity and simplicity. Our Father—intimates our common relation to God, Ephes. 3 : 14, 15. Hallowed—adored, treated with reverence. Thy kingdom come—that spiritual kingdom which has existed from the beginning and is still coming, hence this petition is to be continuous in the Church. Thy will, as in heaven—as cheerfully, constantly, and perfectly. Vs. 11-13. This day—asking only for each day's portion at a time, Prov. 30 : 8. Forgive—as—Our forgivingness of spirit put as a reason for God's forgiveness of us. Debts—obligations—an important view of sin, as requiring reparation which we cannot render. The Divine procedure in this matter will be exactly what our own is, vs. 14, 15. Lead us not—let us not be willingly drawn into, see ch. 26 : 41. From evil—from sin.*

Beware of making Christ's warning against ostentatious giving an excuse for not giving at all, as some people do : nor his warning against vain repetitions an excuse for neglecting prayer.

Our Father's Care.

FEBRUARY 29th.]

[MATT. VI. 24-34.]

THE illustrations which now follow shew that filial confidence in God is an important part of that "righteousness" of the kingdom referred to in the previous lessons. *No man can serve—belong to and be entirely subject to the orders of. Two masters—much less two gods. The servant must obey one or other, and their commands are sure at some time to be contradictory. Mammon—a Syriac word meaning gain, whatever one trusts in. Here it stands for riches as a god of the heart : so that the service or worship of this god and the true God together is impossible. V. 25. Take no thought—no anxious concern, as in 1 Sam. 9 : 5. Your life—the things of this life. There is a thought of temporal matters which is not only lawful but right, Prov. 27 : 23. Rom. 12 : 11. But fretting and worrying evidence distrust in our Father's care. Is not the life more—It is in Him we live and have our being, Acts 17 : 28. If we can trust Him for the greater, why doubt Him in that which is less ? V. 26. Behold the fowls—Oh—serve God's providence towards inferior creatures, void of reason and incapable of sowing and reaping. If He provides for them surely He will for His own children. V. 27. Taking thought—desiring never so anxiously. One cubit—nearly 22 inches. Stature—rather his age—the idea being, however anxious to live long, you cannot add a single step to your life's journey. Vs. 28-30. Consider—Observe closely. How the lilies grow—beautiful are they, but how short-lived ! Much more cloth—not more beautifully array ; His children will be content with suitable clothing, 1 Tim. 6 : 8. Vs. 32, 33. The Gentiles—heathen. Those who have no definite aspirations beyond the present life. Seek—manifest unnecessary anxiety about all these things. Seek ye first—in order of importance. The Kingdom of God, &c.—The main subject of the whole sermon, so amply illustrated and enforced, the seeking of which is to be made the object of supreme choice and pursuit. All shall be added—over and above the spiritual blessings sought, as in the case of Solomon, 2 Chron. 1 : 11, 12. V. 34. Therefore—because your Father cares for you, have no anxiety about the future. Mind present duty and leave events to God. This does not forbid prudent foresight. Sufficient unto the day—Every day brings its own cares ; there is therefore no need to borrow trouble that belongs to another day.*

WE MAY LEARN much from what we see in nature. **RIGHTEOUSNESS** is the great thing to be sought after, Prov. 4 : 7. To anticipate troubles is only to double them. By prayer we obtain strength to bear up under them. The promise of "added" temporal blessings means those things which our Father knows we need and sees to be good for us. Our Father's care for us should lead us to care for others, Phil. 2 : 4. 1 John 3 : 16, 17. Worldliness and distrust are *heathenish*.